



## *What is PTSD?*

PTSD refers to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is an anxiety disorder resulting from a traumatic or life-changing event. Examples of traumatic events include:

- Combat or war experiences
- Sexual Assault
- Car accident or plane crash

PTSD can occur even if the traumatic event happened to someone else. For example, a loved one being seriously injured or killed. Even witnessing a stranger going through trauma can result in PTSD.

## **What you need to know**

PTSD is not a sign of weakness. It is the body's attempt to cope with extreme stress. It is unclear why some people develop PTSD while others do not. For some people, PTSD, symptoms start soon after the traumatic event. For others, symptoms show up weeks, months, or even years later. Learning what symptoms to look out for is important.

### **Re-experiencing Symptoms**

- Frequent, painful memories of the traumatic event
- Reliving the traumatic event through flashbacks and nightmares
- Strong feelings of distress brought on by the memories
- Strong physical reactions from memories including increased heart rate and sweating

### **Avoidance Symptoms**

- Trying to stay away from reminders of the trauma such as people or places
- Avoiding talking about the traumatic event or watching the news
- Feeling emotionally numb and distant, especially from those you were close to
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed

### **Hyper-arousal symptoms**

- Feeling anxious and "on edge"
- Being irritable and having angry outbursts
- Having difficulty paying attention or concentrating
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Feeling jumpy or easily startled

## What are other problems commonly associated with PTSD

Symptoms of PTSD disrupt the service member's life. Relationships with family and friends become strained. PTSD can make it hard to even get through the day. This can lead to:

- Drinking or drug problems
- Depression, guilt and shame
- Family problems like divorce and domestic violence
- Difficulty holding down a job

## When Should You Get Help for your service member?

If your service member is suffering from PTSD, seek help right away. Early treatment is important because PTSD can worsen over time. There is no single solution for PTSD. Treatment may include therapy as well as medication. Treatment can help the person cope with painful memories. It can give the service member back a sense of control.



### REMEMBER...

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